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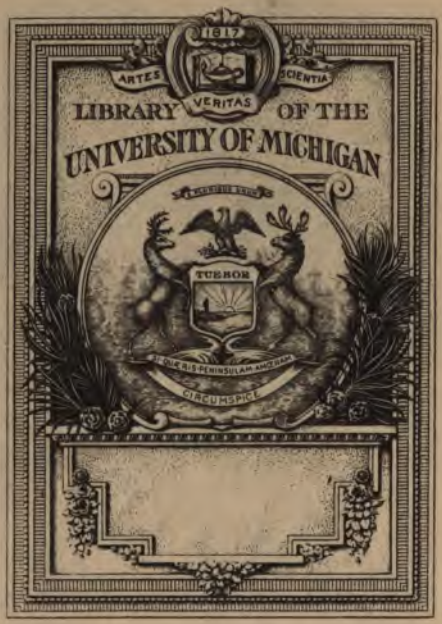
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THE MODERN HOUSE;

ITS FURNISHINGS AND DECORATION.

A LECTURE delivered befor The Architectural Section of The Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, on Monday Evening, 11th January, 1904.

BY

JOHN TAYLOR

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THE MODERN HOUSE;

ITS FURNISHINGS AND DECORATION.

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his ideas seldom ranged above so many pieces of furniture on so many square yards of carpet, with the most conventional drapery thrown in. Conception, color, design, and execution were alike bad, and houses furnished at this particular period may be said to have touched a lower level than at any time during the last 150 or 200 years.

The hall and staircase—ridiculous with paper imitation blocks of marble, jaundiced by time and varnish, the dining-room heavy with badly designed furniture in mahogany, too modern to be interesting even in colour, unsympathetic haircloth on the chairs and sofa, requiring great thick knitted tidies to make it tolerable, grotesquely coloured and patterned carpet, and insanitary aggravating wall paper, all forming a combination that to-day seems amazing considering the purpose for which it was arranged. The drawing-room, stiff and starched, with conventional walnut or rosewood suite, plus a devotional chair, seldom if ever put to its legitimate use, the inartistic upholstery hiding its faded blushes under a profusion of crocheted antimacassars, reminding one, as a witty lecturer of the early eighties once remarked, of an eternal washing day.

The bed-rooms, where, if anywhere, sweetness and light should have been found, chambers of gloom and veritable dust-traps, with heavy, ponderous, immovable furniture, designed and built for the use of successive generations; beds of the four-post type, or the last lingering connection of this monstrosity, the half-tester, with in some cases a hundred yards of damask, cunningly folded for the convenience of dust, germ, and microbe, and sometimes undisturbed for a generation.

A little variation followed when the funereal period supervened and ebonised and gilded furniture became all the rage. As if this were not enough of gloom it became popular to upholster drawing-room furniture with black satin studded with red buttons, or vice versa, with hangings to match; the effect of this arrangement being indescribably vulgar.

With such embellishments as needlework, wax flowers under-glass shades, tombstone-like black and white marble chimney-pieces and many other adornments in keeping, we reach the period of awakening and revolt that I may claim as coming within the definition of my paper.

Now the hopeless condition into which the art of furnishing had drifted was due to the desertion of the artist and the architect from direct interest in the matter, and the leaving the field

to the men of purely commercial instinct, with no higher ambition than a large turnover, showing a liberal percentage of profits. I am not going to condemn the commercial spirit in business, for this must be the basis of all successful enterprise; what I wish to convey is, that where no higher motive actuates a business manager, you need not look for an expression of art in that quarter.

Now just as the withdrawal of the influence of the artist and architect acted adversely on the furnishing and decorating of the house, when their interest and active co-operation were re-enlisted such an extraordinary change was brought about that it may fairly be described as the new Renaissance in House Furnishing and Decorating.

During the one period, public taste in matters furnishing was so illiterate that it accepted thankfully, or at all events without protest, what the scarcely better informed professional decorator had to offer; while to-day, if the demand be the furnishing of a mansion house, or cottage, a little re-decoration, the covering for a chair, a cushion to make luxurious the end of a sofa, or even a yard of ribbon or gimp, the ambition exists—quite irrespective of the knowledge—to have the whole correct in every detail, or the detail in perfect harmony with its environment.

So strongly marked is this characteristic of the modern furnishing idea, that I have heard of a retired colonel—military men are strong in detail—who spent some days examining hundreds of patterns of material for covering his drawing room furniture, because, said he, "I must have it to match my water-colours, you know." The reflection was that if the cretonne did match the pictures they could not have been a choice collection.

Again on more than one occasion I have met a lady who, endeavouring to choose a material to occupy a prominent position in her room, wondered whether this or that would harmonise or contrast best with the colour of her hair.

I mention these cases not at all flippantly, but to make good my point, that whereas formerly the party furnishing trusted almost entirely to the guidance of the upholsterer, to-day, there is a wide-spread disposition on the part of the public to understand and experiment in the matter of colour-schemes and other combinations connected with the furnishing and beautifying of the house.

One other illustration of the different styles of the two periods referred to. A few miles from Glasgow, at the foot of the

Campsie Hills, there stands a fine old house built to the plans of the famous Adam. There are ceilings and architraves, and other embellishments with all this master's wealth of beautiful detail, but every room in the house is disfigured with one of those hideous black or white chimney-pieces, so unaccountably popular from twenty to thirty years ago. A former proprietor agreed to the removal and destruction of all the rare Adam mantlepieces and the substitution of the others, to bring the house in part into line with modern ideas. This was the old spirit, while the new is evidenced by the present owner and occupier, so intelligently conscious of, and distressed at, this unfeeling act of vandalism that it qualifies his appreciation of a fine old house.

Well then, we have the trained and experienced architect, admitting that when he has built the house his work is not completed; we have the furniture and decorative designer (frequently an artist of no mean order), putting his best work into the decoration of the house; we have other artists of repute giving their attention to textile and other designs; and we have a combination of skilled craftsmen to carry out the work in an intelligent manner; we have all this, together with an awakened public opinion, and yet we are but at the beginning of the reform of Modern House Decorating and Furnishing.

One swallow does not make a summer, neither will an architect and designer here and there, guiding and directing every detail of the house and its furnishing, speedily revolutionise an established system out of harmony with the growing artistic spirit of the age.

The day is not yet gone when you may have a house resembling any style without, within a conglomeration of every known and many unknown styles, competing as to which will attract most notice.

You may enter through an Early English hall, to a Chippendale library, retire to a Victorian bedroom, to dress in twentieth century habiliments, step down stairs over a Turkey carpet to the drawing-room, where, standing on a square made in Bridgeton, or Donegal, or Austria, you survey a room that is a feeble imitation of a French Salon of the most brilliant Louis Seize period, with a corner like a modern museum, or a touch of far away India, China, or Japan thrown in. The second gong sounds and you take your partner into a so-called Jacobean dining-

room, where between the soup and the walnuts your trained eye perceives the latest American invention on the walls, an up-to-date telescope table, its modernity conveniently hiding under the table-cloth, on which there is a dinner set turned by a potter still at the wheel, a family portrait by Herkomer, or Sir George Reid, together with a seascape by Peter Graham or Joseph Henderson. The only thing in the room reminiscent of the Jacobean period being the design of the panelling, the moulding of the sideboard, or the style or shape of the chair.

Now this absurd medley, this unsuccessful imitation might very well be termed "The art of how not to furnish.". It has little connection with the house, less with the owner or occupier, and next to none with the period in which we live.

At His Majesty's Theatre in London there is now being performed nightly a Japanese play entitled "The Darling of the Gods." It is the marvel of the season, it is applauded both by the public and the critics, and it is one of the greatest draws of the day.

Now why is this? Not because of any superlative merit, or absorbing interest in the play, but because of the art of the setting, the faithfulness with which every detail is presented, the true expression of local colour.

If we would have a French drawing-room, we can only do full justice to French art by employing a French upholsterer, and if we wish an Oriental room it requires more than a Turkey or Persian carpet on the floor, and a "Kelim" rug on the sofa to give it that character.

But why should we attempt an imitation of styles or periods that at best will be out of harmony with the house, the time, and the requirements of the user?

Is this the only method of furnishing practicable at the beginning of the twentieth century? A method that satisfied our predecessors when, as I have reminded you, public taste in such matters was practically non-existent; and professional capacity, with little incentive to stimulate it, of the most mediocre description.

No! a new spirit is abroad, men and women to-day demand more utility and beauty in the home in which they spend so much of their lives, and which exercises such a powerful influence on their health and temperament; and the reply to this is the new note in decorating and furnishing, modern art, the new school,

"L' Art Nouveau," or any other name that is applied to the strength, and talent, and devotion, which many of our younger artists are bringing to bear on the art of furnishing and beautifying the house.

Now this new school may be said to have originated with what is commonly known as "The Arts and Crafts Movement," and in any case to have been helped on by the Arts and Crafts Society. Ten years ago Morris, speaking of the revivial in decorative art said, "It is this conscious cultivation of art, and the attempt to interest the public in it, which the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society has set itself to help, by calling special attention to that really most important side of art, the decoration of utilities by furnishing them with genuine artistic finish in place of trade finish." Following on this movement there nas grown up a school with fresh, original ideas and expressions, varied according to the training, the taste, or temperament of the exponent, but agreeing in such essentials as correctness of design, harmony of colour, individuality and simplicity of expression, and, in consequence, absence of all conventionality.

The new school has encountered much opposition and ridicule in different quarters, but has notwithstanding steadily pursued its course, until to-day not only throughout our own country, but in many Continental countries, and even in go-ahead America, the progress made by it is considerable. And when I remind you that men like Voisey, Bailie Scott, George Walton, Charles Ashbee, Charles R. Mackintosh, George Logan, John Ednie, E. A. Taylor, and others have practically given up their lives to the furtherance of the movement, the measure of success achieved is in great part explained.

Original conceptions of colouring and grouping, utility in form and simplicity in design, the introduction of new ideas and materials, and the fresh application of old ones, the working out of each scheme to the minutest detail as a complete harmonious whole, are amongst the leading features of the new school.

You will readily understand that much depends on the sympathetic co-operation of the manufacturer, the decorator and the various craftmen united in expressing the ideas of the school, and in this connection I may be permitted to single out one firm of manufacturers, who by the employment of the best designers, and a determination to produce only that which is

natural and beautiful, relying on the colour and design revealed by Nature herself, have done more to popularise the new art than any other manufacturer. I refer to Alexander Morton & Co., of Darvel, Donegal and Carlisle.

Speaking of our craftsmen, I may here observe that the artistic movement of our time would be greatly helped and extended if our artisans received a better general and technical training.

The old guild system, and more recently the indentured apprenticeship, reared better craftsmen than the present system of specialization. Moreover, we live in such rushing times that there is little opportunity for carefully training the youthful artisan; he goes to a trade at an age when he little understands or appreciates the necessity or importance of acquiring knowledge; no one cares greatly whether he learns or not, and he is left very much to his own resources, with perhaps the good-natured, occasional assistance or advice of a fellow-worker, who may not have journeyed far on the road to knowledge himself. The result inevitably is the acquisition of wrong or imperfect methods, and the rearing of a class of workmen skilled only in name. But this is a large question, sufficient in itself as a subject for a paper, and introduced here only to emphasize one of the drawbacks to the progress of the new artistic movement. I will speak of others further on.

An artistic lady once remarked to me that "the modern style of furnishing might be very nice and appropriate for such countries as South America and others of a genial climate, but for our Northern latitude with its inclement winter and rigorous climate, something with a greater show of comfort was needed."

While admitting that we are apt to be influenced by appearances, apart altogether from realities, there is nothing in the new style to prevent our rooms or houses from being at least as comfortable as those fitted and furnished in the most orthodox or antiquated way. Comfort is not art, and while comfort without art may continue to satisfy a considerable section of the public, it is quite possible to have art in conjunction with comfort, and there is a growing demand for it.

It was scarcely necessary for Mr. Aymer Vallance to point out in The Magazine of Art the extreme absurdities of the modern drawing-room, or for slides illustrating it to have been shown to-night. Every one is familiar with its features; it is to be found in all its glory throughout the land, particularly in districts

patronised by the newly rich, where there is such a spirit of emulation to outdo your neighbor on the other side of the road, and where there is much zeal and little knowledge in matters of household art.

Need I remind you of the conditions under which some of those houses are decorated and furnished.

It may be a case of a newly married couple, neither of whom may have ever previously given a serious or intelligent thought to the matter.

They have as little idea of colour and design as a man with no music in his soul has of melody and harmony, and they may be unlucky enough to fall into the hands of a salesman who is versed only in one phase of art—the art of selling.

Now this badly equipped combination begins the work of setting up an environment that is to exert a powerful influence on two or more people for the rest of their natural lives, and it is a pretty general experience, that the less the parties furnishing know about the subject, the more eager and determined are they to dogmatise on every detail as the work proceeds.

I am far from suggesting that you do not find able and honorable assistance in the work of furnishing amongst the salesmen of Glasgow, an extended experience encourages me in the belief that there is more consciousness, in this class here than in almost any other part of the country, and I feel sure it must have been of some other quarter the German lady who had spent many years of her life in Paris spoke, when she observed "Here it is so different, a salesman will really sell you anything whither it be suitable or not; and if you do not know you may get—as I have seen—crimson curtains, with a terra-cotta carpet. But in Paris, a salesman will say, "No madam. I cannot sell you that, it would spoil my reputation."

If unfortunate enough to come across this want of intelligence in a salesman, you have one of the greatest hindrances there to artistic furnishing.

Now the whole tendency of modern life is toward simplicity, and one of the special features of the new art, and perhaps its chief recommendation, is the absence of all complexity.

To be simple in decoration you are more likely to show good taste than if you attempt anything of an ornate character. Unless—to borrow an illustration from Ruskin—you are a Raphael decorating a suite of apartments like those in the Vatican, a Corregio beautifying cupolas like those in the Church at Parma,

a Michael Angelo, making famous for all time a ceiling in the Pontiff's private chapel, or a Tintoretto, a Titian, or a Veronese, engaged in decorating the outside brick walls on some of the houses of their beautiful Venice.

Simplicity accords best with present manners, customs, ideas, and attainments, and this characteristic in the home is more likely to add to our happiness as well as our comfort and convenience, than the imitation of a style affected by any period, however grand or famous it may have been.

Then how excellent is simplicity from a hygienic as well as an economical point of view, a sufficient argument for its favourable consideration in all our large dirty cities at least.

I would freely endorse the expurgation of all cornices and dust catching and retaining projections, and applaud the reform introduced by some of our Glasgow architects in this direction, the simplicity of whose plaster and other work is thoroughly in sympathy with the new movement.

Another feature is the relation of every part to the whole, each particular constituent being designed and made for its position, with an intelligent idea of a harmony complete, in place of being procured in the open market, where your adjoining neighbour may purchase a duplicate.

A fresh originality of treatment, stamped throughout with the individuality of an artist who has made himself acquainted with your house and its character, as well as with your requirements and predilections, not a slavish, indifferent imitation of a style that prevailed at any time from one to five hundred years ago, with which you have neither connection nor sympathy, and which offers little or no opportunity for individualistic treatment.

Again by adopting the modern style you first of all admit that to-day we are artistic enough to have a style of our own, and you help forward the movement, exactly as the artists of every well defined period in the history of architecture, furniture and decoration have done before you.

William Morris' biographer has said that the building of "The Red House," by the artist-poet-socialist, influenced half the houses since erected in England.

This, no doubt, is slightly coloured by the bias of the biographer, but the fact remains that architecture is passing through an evolutionary period, and that to-day you are building houses in accord with twentieth century ideas, and it would be an insult

to appropriateness to decorate and furnish them in a style suited to the architecture of the nineteenth, the eighteenth, or the seventeenth centuries.

In this as in every other department of life it is easier to imitate than to strike out on lines original, hence it is more likely to be the strong men that you will find ranged on the side of any departure from the beaten track.

The beaten track and new departures remind me of an experience I had the other day on visiting two adjacent houses in the same terrace, perhaps one of the most strikingly ugly terraces, from an architectural point of view, erected in Glasgow in recent times.

A was purchased with a condition that it be finished by the building contractor, and he finished it in such an appalling way that I venture to say there is nothing in this district that could outdo it in aggressive vulgarity.

B was purchased before any interior work was attempted, handed over to one of Glasgow's I. A's., who works largely on modern lines, and in conjunction with a leading house furnisher he has made an interior so beautiful that standing within, you forget all that is without, feeling in a different world altogether surrounded by the conception and the creation of an intelligent artistic mind.

Now it is an easy matter to talk in generalities, but in dealing with a practical subject something more is required than mere abstractions. I will endeavour to fill in the picture by giving a rough outline of an ideal house on modern lines, just as it occurs to my mind, and I will sketch the ideal house on the same principle as "Billie's sister Nell," formed her idea of heaven.

"Just a little bit she'd heard,
With a little bit invented,
And a little bit inferred."

Well then the architectural features I will leave to you, with this proviso, the rooms must not be too large or lofty, and some of them, in place of having unbroken walls, should be formed into recesses or nooks; the oriel window must be omitted, and windows suited to the modern style substituted.

The hall must be large, and if practicable open to the roof, with the well staircase left out of the plan. The hall, however, to be capable of treatment as a living room with easy access to all the other parts of the house.

The bedrooms easily ventilated, free from projection, ledges, cornices, and all dust retainers; for the rest, in our small ideal house the decorative artists and furniture designer will be responsible.

Our colour scheme will differ from the unsympathetic disconnected treatment of the local painter, with his blue room, red room, and white room, in being a congruous scheme of well arranged colour in which each part bears its due relation to the whole, so that when viewing one room from the other, or one or more from the hall, the quality and value of colour will be arranged and distributed so that harmony be preserved.

The lower walls of the hall may be simply panelled, or strapped, or merely covered with a grey-green Fabrikona to a height of 8 feet, according to the amount of money at disposal. The wood work stained a dark brown, forming a natural harmony with the green, as the tree trunk with the leaves.

Above the filling there might run a grey coloured frieze with a simple, striking, stencilled design, carefully thought out and executed, because this will be one of the first features to meet the eye on entering the house.

The upper part of the walls should be treated quite simply redeemed from plainness by repeating toward the ceiling a variation of the stencilled pattern on the frieze.

The floor may be of plain parquet, or covered with a green or brown unpatterned linoleum, and furnished with appropriate rugs of the Donegal type. Keep the hall airy looking, furnish it sparingly, in oak or walnut fumed or stained to suit the fixed wood work.

If used on occasion as music-room, and its lofty ceiling is suggestive of suitability for such use, the sitting accommodation may be temporarily augmented to the needed requirement.

Such a hall is more rational than the ordinary portentous, dimly lighted space that in most cases passes under this name, and occupies such an important part of the average house.

The note for the dining-room should be dignified cheerfulness, in place of the gloom and heaviness commonly associated with our eating apartment. I have sat at a dining table where you could not recognize some of the other guests; and in the north of England recently I took supper in a room where one of G. F. Watt's famous portraits is hung, without being aware of it until the following day.

Our dining-room colour might be a pretty peacock blue with a flat band of wood running round the room about 3 feet from the ceiling. We leave the Fabrikona walls unadorned here to form a good back-ground for the collection of pictures so common now-a-days, the blue contrasting well with the gilded frames. The frieze of deep cream coloured Fabrikona might have a repeating vertical design picked out in blues and greens and yellows.

The furniture and woodwork should be of a rich brown colour, the former in Austrian oak, stained to the required shade and waxed. Sideboard with low back, simple in design and construction, chairs ditto, with a complete absence of elaborate carving, so disfiguring to many of the dining-room chairs now in use and in their dust retaining propensities, so thoroughly opposed to the principles of cleanliness.

Avoid bric-a-brac here; let the hangings harmonize rather than contrast with the walls; have no garishness in the carpet or upholstery; concentrate sufficient light on the table; such are the outlines of our ideal dining-room.

The drawing-room has somehow come to be considered the piece-de-resistance of furnishing schemes, and here it is the custom to lavish money and so-called art, the result is frequently disappointing, and the room as frequently suggests a place not to live in.

To counteract this tendency we trust in our ideal drawing-room to simple natural effects, all appearance of undue expense and elaboration being rigourously excluded.

Grey and green are our colours here, fresher and lighter in shade than those of the hall. The walls might have a very simple panelled dado of pine, stained a light grey, or the dado might be formed by vertical straps at intervals, capped with a horizontal rail, the panels filled in with a lilac coloured Fabrikona, the upper wall with a willow green.

I have hitherto said nothing regarding the ceilings; in every case in our ideal house these would be treated in plain tones; here we would have the accommodating ivory tint.

If lucky enough to have an artist friend he might offer to decorate a panel over the chimney piece, or in other suitable place, as did Rossetti and Burne Jones in the house of their friend William Morris, giving a value to the room such as no so called work of art could ever bestow.

A green or lilac carpet, or a blend of the two colours, with simple pretty curtains of hand-loom linen, enriched with sympathetic embroidery to give them a distinctive character, will complete the fixed furnishings of the room.

Regarding the movable pieces, on no account over furnish, if you do, the very conditions already deplored will be reproduced.

There are no protruding toes on the chairs, projecting cornices on cabinets at a height inaccessible to the duster, no meaningless ornaments, or absurd drapery around the fireplace, making that conspicuous feature of the room like a dwarfed window.

Furniture grey stained and dull polished, each article bearing the stamp of utility rather than ornament. Small pictures arranged to meet the eye of an ordinary sized individual, selected with discrimination to look well in the room—thus reversing the method of the retired Colonel—and each placed in the most advantageous position.

Exclude all commonplace ornament. Trust to plants and cut-flowers for the best decoration; do not have a show-room, but a habitable, comfortable apartment, where art, music and culture, may meet and feel at home.

If we have a breakfast room it should face the rising sun when practicable, and be conspicuously bright and cheerful, not on the area plan, like half the breakfast rooms in London.

There is nothing like beginning the day with a clear, bright outlook; it is good for temper, health and business, and there is mothing more conducive to this desirable state than that the first engagement of the day should be kept under the most cheerful and favourable conditions.

The billiard-room has become such an indispensable part of the house economy of Glasgow that we cannot leave it out of our ideal house.

The difficulty here lies in the fact that, to begin with, you have a field of emerald green fixed by immutable law at 12 ft x 6 ft. Let this be as an emerald stone and give it a quiet but rich setting. Walnut or oak table with square legs formed on a simple plan, grey Fabrikona walls, with touches of soft orange coloured decoration, black iron grate with green or blue-grey tiles, orange carpet runners and suitable seats, with an abundance of light, the whole scheme being kept subordinate to the table and the player.

The bedrooms being more isolated than the living rooms, may be treated more independently. Patterned papers are for the most part avoided; there is sufficient variety and brightness in the blue, lilac, green cream and yellow tints for the average number of bedrooms without falling back on designs that in many cases becomes perplexing if not annoying.

As a general rule, it will be found, that the simpler the wall covering the better and more satisfying it is as a background for dainty furniture, pictures, etc.

Exclude everything of a distracting nature from the bedroom; if the influenza or other fiend detains you there against your will, you are more likely to quit the sick chamber early. If its atmosphere is to be of a soothing, artistic nature; so powerfully affected are we by our environment. In most houses there is what is known as "the spare bedroom;" on this is bestowed as much care and expense as in most of the other bedrooms put together. It is usually uninhabited until the arrival of the favoured guest, who, because of its brand new and apparently got up look, is quite unable to make terms with repose. This is put down to "change of bed," or some other cause, when in reality it is because a misconceived idea opposes the very purpose for which the room was intended.

A simple room, fresh as the breath of spring, with neat pretty furnishings, together with good health and a clean conscience is a combination seldom successfully resisted by slumber.

I have known a millionaire in whose sleeping chamber there was represented as much wealth as, judiciously invested, would have supported an ordinary family for a lifetime. By cunning mechanism the air of the room could be heated or cooled at will, and by doing little more than wishing, his every want and requirement were instantly satisfied. But he couldn't sleep, and I question if he ever clearly understood that this was because of the multitude and grandeur of his surroundings.

In our ideal house the guest chamber and the others are alike simple, the highest compliment we can pay to ourselves and our visitors.

One of the rooms is ivory coloured, the furniture of the same tint, constructed on the fitment plan, not a piece in the room standing higher than 5 ft., the height of the panelling.

A pretty frieze of briar roses and harebells gives the necessary colour to the fresh walls, applique curtains, and bed cover-

let repeat the colouring, and an Indian or Yokohoma matting—the most hygienic covering for bedroom floors—completes the scheme. With light oak, mahogany, walnut and plain tree, stained to any desired shade, and with an intelligent variation of the tints mentioned, we complete our ideal house in a rational and withal economical way.

One point more, a low bed is more restful looking than a high one, and one free from all drapery is better than if you adorned it with the finest fabric ever produced.

I had almost forgotten one of the principal rooms of the house, perhaps because it was remotely situated.

The nursery has a smooth floor with no projections for tripping up unwary little feet, no sharp corners on the furniture, walls stencilled with decorative birds and flowers, or a maypole or other subject pleasing to the young mind. The decorations should be changed here from time to time, and fresh, and more interesting ones substituted.

Hygiene should be the first consideration in bedrooms and nurseries; we spend so much of our time there that nothing should be tolerated that is at all opposed to cleanliness.

Well then, public opinion is ripe for a reform in house furnishing and decorating on the lines suggested in my paper; there is evidence of this in the interest taken in examples of the work of the new school when exhibited in our own country, and on the Continent, in the growing number of artists and designers giving their time and attention to it, in the interest and co-operation of many of our leading textile and furniture manufacturers, and in the support and encouragement extended by the more artistic amongst the public. Now what are the drawbacks with which the new movement is confronted? Established custom, always difficult to break down, non-fixity of tenure for most of us making us hesitate before we carry out artistic schemes, which may have to be left behind as unexhausted improvements, extravagant and grotesque interpretations of the new art, that have done more to hinder its adoption than most of the other deterring causes, unintelligent and ill-natured criticism, like that of a writer who recently published a book of 264 pages, entitled, "Our Homes and How to Beautify Them," in which he incorporated a chapter on the new style of furnishing, entitling it, "Hooliganism in Art," and exhausted himself in the small space of a page and a half, showing that his knowledge of the subject was the most limited description, while admitting the

importance of the movement by introducing a notice of it into the latest treatise on the beautifying of the house.

Another serious drawback to rationalism in furnishing is the lack of a thorough artistic training for the salesman. As in the case of the artisan there is no proper school or system of training for him, and he may become a law or a license to himself, and set out as a director when he may have need of being directed.

In such an important matter as the furnishing and decorating of the house, the public are entitled to expect expert guidance and advice, and if this is not always forthcoming it is little wonder that the parties furnishing revert to styles with which they have had some familiarity, or borrow from the fads and fancies of the orange-box manipulator, and how to furnish a flat for 50 pounds school.

The subject is so important that I would strongly advocate that the principles of design and harmony of colour should be taught by experts in both the girls' and boys' section at school. It would prove as interesting, and be at least as useful as a smattering of the dead languages, forgotten immediately the scholar has passed through Standard VI., or the exact dates of some historical facts or fables.

This instruction would interest the youthful minds in the technicalities of their home surroundings, and when it fell to the lot of some of them to establish a home of their own, it would be easy to give it such an individualistic touch as to make it far more interesting and attractive than if it were the exclusive creation of a professional decorator, or the compromise of a committee of mothers-in-law, aunts, or other officious friends of the family.

I would have a school of artisans and salesmen, where the best technical instruction would be available, not the theory that at present passes for technical training, and that is forcing us behind in the race for industrial supremacy; and I would have it as compulsory that each student should pass a certain standard before he was accredited a skilled artisan or salesman, as it is for our professional men before they are allowed to practice, or divinity students before they are licensed to preach.

Then, all working for the one ideal, healthy, rational, artistic homes, where comfort, art, and beauty did abound (because with the higher intelligence it would be impossible to live in